1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

completely exhausted or reduced to a mere trickle. The average annual rainfall over the last ten years is 29·75 in. The shore waters of Lake Pamolombe are well stocked with fish. Both districts are well wooded, with a large variety of timber trees. In the dry sandy soil where the population is unable to live for lack of water, the prevalent type is *tsanya*. A line of foothills from Zomba to Chikala are conserved as Forest Reserves.[1]

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY[2]

The Yao are chiefly agriculturists, and in the old days were also hunters. As they live largely in tsetse-infested areas, they do not keep cattle, except for a few herds near Fort Johnston and Zomba, in Nyasaland, and on the east of Lake Nyasa,[3] in the mountains of the Ruvuma valley around Mataka's.[4]

Abdullah describes a time when the Yao were economically self-sufficient, making their own bark-cloth, weaving, burning herbs for salt, and working iron for the tools they needed. Nevertheless, the tradition of coastward journeys for trading with the Arabs was well developed before the Europeans came to the country. They used to trade cattle and salt from the Manganja and Lomwe for tobacco and hoes, and in exchange for slaves they got from the Arabs gunpowder, guns, swords, beads, coloured cloths, earthenware, and foodstuffs.[5] Slaving expeditions were among the most important activities of the chiefs.[6] The old tradition of the absence of the men from the village owing to these expeditions, is continued in modern times by soldiers and labour migrants to Southern Rhodesia and the Union. These men send back remittances to the area, but the main population is supported by agriculture. Cash is needed for purchasing salt and cloth, for paying certain dues and fines formerly paid in kind—adultery compensation, diviner's and initiation fees—as well as for tax and rent. Consequently, while certain crops, such as tobacco and ground-nuts, are grown for cash, any food crop is liable to be sold in one form or another in local markets or by the roadside.

The food crops are maize, sorghum, finger millet, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts, legumes. Fish is an important article of diet. Eggs are believed to cause sterility and are only eaten by those outside the child-propagating age; milk is disliked and never consumed.[7] *Termite alates* (flying ants) are a much relished food when they come out on nuptial flights. Rice is considered a superior food, and is eaten when possible on ritual occasions.[8]

Tobacco is the main cash crop, with individual production under the supervision of the Agricultural Department. The average cash earned per grower in 1943–4 was £5. 3*s*. This is overwhelmingly an external trade. Ground-nuts, which are sold at government-controlled markets to licensed buyers, bring in only a few shillings a year to the average seller. Women obtain cash by selling beer. At the lake shore the fishing industry is very important. Natives owning big nets are said to make between £20

[1] Murray, 1932, pp. 147–61.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, the information is from J. C. Mitchell, and relates to the Yao of south Nyasaland.

[3] Young, E., 1877, p. 102.

[4] Livingstone, 1874, pp. 72 and 80.

[5] Abdullah, 1919, pp. 10–11, 26–30.

[6] See Livingstone, 1874, p. 68; Young, E., 1877, p. 139; Thompson, 1882, p. 78; Sclater, 1893, p. 422; Maugham, 2, 1929, pp. 86–7; Laws, 1934, pp. 35–7.

[7] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 34.

[8] Barker, 1934, p. 14.

and £30 per annum. It is profitable to carry fresh fish inland by bicycle even as far as Blantyre,[1] as the shore price to the retailer is 4*s.* a load, which later may fetch from 16*s.* to 24*s.*[2] Yao on the south-west lake shore grow an excellent quality rice.[3] Rice is also grown near Lake Chilwa, but is mainly sold in the market organized near the lake shore by the Agricultural Department.

Division of Labour

The man builds the house, hunts, fishes, makes the nets, baskets, grain-store, game-traps, and, in the old days, the bark-cloth. He cultivates the tobacco. He cuts down the trees and may help with the hoeing and harvesting. The woman hoes, muds the floor of the hut, sweeps, cooks, brings firewood, draws water, brews beer, makes the pots and pipes.[4]

Land Usage

There are two types of garden in the Yao areas south of Lake Nyasa: one the ordinary garden in which the staples grow, and second, gardens along the stream beds. These latter are especially valuable for providing out-of-season crops. In addition most householders have a few small plots for tobacco and ground-nuts.

The main garden is cultivated by the slash-and-burn method, common in Central Africa. The Yao, unlike the Bemba, garden occupies the whole area cleared. Burning is done just before the rainy season (October–November). The ash and soil are hoed into elongated mounds and grain is planted along the ridges. Gardens may be cultivated for more than five years. In the second and subsequent years of cultivation the stalks and weeds are piled up and burnt. There are signs of soil impoverishment. The gardens are cleared in August, and heaped to dry for burning. After the burning the seeds are planted in late November. By February and March green maize is available to supplement the diet, and by the end of April the crops are ready to be harvested. The maize is stored in wicker containers, while sorghum is stored in the huts on a stand. Cassava is planted in large mounds made by turning the turfs over, so that the roots are outside the mound and the vegetable matter inside. Legumes are planted in smaller gardens, or interplanted with the main crop. Ground-nuts are stored, after being shelled, in mud-plastered wicker containers, designed to be rat-proof. Tobacco is planted at the sides of the streams for hand-watering in the seedling stage, and then transplanted about January. The leaves are ready to be plucked about April and soon afterwards they are marketed. Sweet potatoes are planted in the rainy season, and are ready for eating in May. The stream gardens yield out-of-season crops—maize, beans, pumpkins, and also sugar-cane, which is used in the initiation ceremonies.

Craftsmanship

The Yao have few skills. All cultivation is by hoe; axes and knives are their only other technological equipment. The men make mats from reeds and palm leaf, and the women make pottery. The huts are strongly built from poles laced with bamboo and plastered with mud. The roof is thatched with grass. Under Arab influence the

[1] *Census of Native Population*, 1931, p. 26.
[2] Codrington, 1898, p. 517.
[3] Aplin, 1931, p. 19.
[4] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 236; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 137.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

themselves Alomwe. These people came from that part of Portuguese East Africa immediately to the east of Nyasaland. They speak a group of dialects mutually intelligible and widely different from either Yao or Nyanja. Culturally and structurally they are similar to the Yao and Nyanja, practising matrilineal descent and uxorilocal marriage, and living in small groups of matrilineal kin. Their religious and mystical beliefs are also the same. Some of the linguistic groups that form this congeries are the Shirima, Kokhola, Metho, Thokwani, Ratha, Kuwa, Nahara, Marenje, Nyamwelo, Mihavani and Nikhukhu. These people have been migrating into Nyasaland over the last fifty years, and now predominate in the Cholo and Chiradzulu districts.

The Nyanja were the original inhabitants in these areas, but have been almost completely displaced by the Yao, except in Liwonde along the Shire River and in Kawinga along the Lake Shirwa shores. Linguistically they are more akin to the Yao than to the Lomwe, but their language is still unintelligible to the Yao. Culturally they appear to be similar to the Yao, and they have accepted certain Yao institutions such as the boys' initiation ceremonies (*lupanda*), and have been fitted into the social and political structure.

The Ngoni, of whom there are very few here, are concentrated on the south side of the Chikala Range, in the areas of Chamba and Mposa, who are subordinate chiefs to Kawinga. They are the remnants of various Ngoni armies that raided into Nyasaland during the last two or three decades of the nineteenth century. As far as I could ascertain they have adopted Nyanja ways and language.

Historical Background to the Modern Economic Situation

Nyasaland to-day, as part of the British Empire, is in the general world economic system, and the Africans in the tribal areas participate in this system, though not to the same degree as the White planters in the Shire and Dedza Highlands. If the Yao were ever a people who supported themselves by their agriculture alone, they had adopted a more complex economy long before the Whites came to Nyasaland. Later, when I discuss their historical background, I outline briefly the position

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

439 that the Yao occupied in Central Africa as middlemen and traders. As far back as 1798 Laçerda described the Yao rôle as active traders. They bartered ivory, slaves, beeswax and tobacco with the Arabs along the East Coast of Africa for guns, gun-powder, cloth and beads. We cannot easily estimate what proportion of the population was engaged in whole-time slaving and trading. The larger proportion must have found it necessary to cultivate their gardens of finger-millet and sorghum in the rainy season to supply them with the major food crops. It seems likely that slave-raiding and trading were occupations mostly followed during the dry season.

The Yao therefore had become accustomed to a variation of activities and division of labour, at least a century before the Whites came to Nyasaland. Their wants at this time had already become sufficiently diversified to include cloth, beads, gun-powder and guns. All these trade goods are more durable than the foodstuffs which are the measure of wealth among a people who support themselves entirely by their own produce. But the individual want for these trade goods was limited, and the Yao used their surplus rather as capital for trading farther inland with other tribes.

436 There is considerable evidence, both from my informants and the writings of early travellers, that these trade goods—ivory, 439 cloth and slaves—came to be used as currency, and most people 567 recognized a fixed relationship between the three commodities. A female slave could be exchanged for an amount of calico or ivory that was constant over fairly large parts of Central Africa; the value of a tusk of ivory could be expressed in calico in the same way. By enterprise, therefore, in trading and raiding, 439 an individual could accumulate wealth in the form of calico, guns, 556 beads, ivory or slaves. But the personal consumption of trade 567 goods is of necessity limited, so that the Yao preferred to accumulate their wealth in the form of slaves.[1] The reason for this lies in the general political structure of the early chiefdoms, which I describe later. Slaves were not only labourers and serfs; they also increased the military and political power of their masters. At the same time slaves could be sent to the coast in a caravan and bartered for cloth, or, since they were always prized, they could be used to settle claims for compensation from aggrieved neighbours. The slave trade therefore, although related to domestic

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

slavery in that a trader could at any moment send some of his own slaves to the coast, was actually quite a separate institution.

Although the advent of the White Administration stopped both domestic slavery and the slave-trade to the coast, both of which were vitally important elements in Yao economy, it did nothing to decrease or reduce the variety of the wants of the Africans. On the contrary, it obviously increased those wants. The missionaries, who were the first Whites to settle in Nyasaland, were forced to import large quantities of cloth and beads so that they could buy foodstuffs and pay their labourers. They quite unintentionally, therefore, became competitors with the Yao in this trade. By some accounts their goods were both superior and cheaper. As early as 1878 the African Lakes Company was sponsored by the Church of Scotland Mission, so that it could take over the trading part of their dealings with the Africans. The planters and traders who began to settle in the highlands after 1890 brought more and more cloth, beads and other trade goods into Nyasaland to pay wages and buy foodstuffs.

When the Protectorate was proclaimed in 1891 and the Administration started to put down domestic slavery and the trade in slaves to the coast, the monopoly of trade in goods fell directly into the hands of the Whites. After 1893, when coinage was introduced, the economy of the country rapidly changed from one based on barter with slaves and ivory as the main outgoing commodities, and slaves, calico, beads and brass rings as the incoming commodities, to an economy in which the wants had become even more diversified. In 1895, the *British Central African Gazette* could record:

> The wants of the people of this part of the world not long ago were limited to sufficient calico to clothe the family, but in one short year their wants now include boots, size and quality a minor point, turbans, coats, and in fact at a distance the half-naked native of yesterday has the appearance of Sikh soldiery.[1]

That the Yao took to the use of money is illustrated by the Acting Commissioner's statement in 1897: 'The Yao thoroughly appreciate having a currency. It has proved, in fact, a great step towards civilizing the native of this part of Africa. He is now able to accumulate his earnings, which formerly in the days of a

[1] Vol. i, 2 (Sept. 26th, 1894).

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

tenance of the whole state under a new king,[1] but the Yao political units seem to have split into two factions when divisions appeared within them. The dissident faction left the parent chiefdom and established itself somewhere else as an independent entity.

The picture my informants have given me substantiates MacDonald's account, though his contact was mainly with Mangoche and not with Machinga Yao. My informants, however, placed greater emphasis than he did upon the importance of trade with the coast. A slave-trading trip was not a venture which the ordinary village headman could undertake with equanimity. The journey to the coast, to Quilimane or to Kilwa, was long and arduous, and strong military protection against bandits was needed. A caravan could only be sent by a chief or someone of like status, so that the coastal trade became the monopoly of the chiefs. Headmen who had ivory and slaves to send to the coast included them in the chief's caravan. When it returned, the headmen were able to collect calico and beads to the value of their contribution. Gun-powder also seems to have been a chief's monopoly. Thus, in fact, he did have some physical control over the military activities of his subject village headmen, since he could withhold supplies of gun-powder if he wished. But in a society where minor chieftains were inimically poised against each other, the maxim 'a chief without people is nothing' had much more significance than it has to-day: a village headman's ultimate sanction was that he could withdraw his support from one chief and give it to another.

The Effects of White Conquest

It was into a society thus organized that the first Missionaries came. I have already described how the Missionaries, by taking in runaway slaves, and by occasional armed combat, entered into political relationships with the chiefs. With the establishment of the Protectorate, the policy, clearly expressed in Sir Harry Johnston's letter,[2] was to stamp out slavery. This was done in numerous campaigns against the Yao chiefs [3] so that by

[1] See Gluckman, M., 'Succession and Civil War among the Bemba: An Exercise in Anthropological Theory', *Human Problems*, xvi (1954), 6–25.

[2] See f.n., p. 29.

[3] See Chap. II, pp. 29–30.

3: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

two feet high and fifteen inches in diameter, hollowed out from above for about two-thirds of its length. Many are made with a kind of base or stand, and some have roughly carved bosses on the outside; these are called "the breasts," doubtless emblematical of women, a large part of whose life is spent in preparing flour (Pl. XV, fig. 15).

The fire-stick. Matches are becoming more widespread year by year and soon the knowledge of how to make fire with a fire drill will be lost. The method employed among the Yao is as follows: a flat surface is cut on a piece of partly rotted wood. In the middle of this a small depression is made, and on one side of the piece of wood a groove is cut leading from the flat cut surface. The piece of wood is held firmly on the ground by one person with a piece of old scorched cloth or some charred sticks at the base of the groove. A second person, by rolling a stick of hard wood rapidly between his hands with the point directed against the depression on the flat surface in which a little sand has been placed, drills a hole into it. The heat developed is sufficient to cause the powdered rotten wood to start smouldering. This is then turned out on the cloth, which is gently waved in the air till it catches fire (Pl. XV, fig. 16).

Boats. With the exception of a small coracle-like vessel, *likuiqwa*, made of rough bark and used for crossing streams, the Yao have no boats. The dug-out canoes which they use at the present day are made for them by the Anyanja. In addition to the bark boat, they use a kind of raft made from the pith tree, *bunqwa*.

Tobacco. The use of tobacco in some form is universal among the tribes of Nyasaland and the Yao are no exception. The method of use varies among the different peoples; smoking, chewing, and snuffing are all practiced, but while the Anyanja is essentially a pipe-smoker, the Yao takes snuff, although I think only lately he has also taken up smoking and chewing. A short time ago, a Yao who chewed would have been laughed at. The Anyanja do not chew but take snuff to a certain extent; the Angoni who do not smoke or chew are inveterate snuff-takers; the Atumbuka, Atonga, Asenga, and Ankonde are pipe-smokers and in lesser degree snuff-takers.

Tobacco is called *sesa* (*fodia*. Chin.). It is prepared by sun-curing the leaf, which is then rolled up into a twist and allowed to dry further. The common tobacco pipe consists of a clay bowl, often ornamented, and a reed stem; it was formerly called *chilongo*, but is now known as *kalio* (Pl. XV, fig. 11). For hemp, *chamba*, the Yao use a water pipe called *ndundu* (*nyunda*, Chin.); this consists of a bamboo water container from which projects a reed stem surmounted by a clay bowl (Pl. XV, fig. 13). The word *ndundu* is also used for a tobacco pipe.

When tobacco is chewed, a little lime paste *swakala* made from snail shells is put in the mouth "to bring out the flavor," a small clay jar being used to carry the *swakala*.

Both the Wayao and the Anyanja prepare snuff by grinding the broken-up tobacco leaves with a stone in a potsherd; the powder is then turned out into another sherd and warmed over a fire. A few drops of a preparation called *magodi* is added for flavor. *Magodi* is

[P. 142B]

II. The Political Structure
BEFORE THE WHITES CAME

173 643 167 (*kukamula lukongolo*), i.e. to surrender to the chief in the area. Also the chief sent out expeditions to capture slaves or he purchased slaves with the cloth and beads he had exchanged for ivory at the East coast.

643 421 Within his territory certain privileges and rights were held by the chief and he had certain religious duties to perform in which the unity of the people in the territory was expressed. In general the chief had rights over any ivory either found or hunted in his territory. If a dead elephant were found the tusks belonged to the chief, though he usually rewarded the finder with cloth. [224] If a man killed an elephant the tusk that lay on the ground belonged to the chief while the other belonged to the killer. The killer's tusk was in- [439] cluded in the chief's caravan to the coast and its value paid in cloth to the killer when the caravan returned.

643 651 The chief was also entitled to an annual tribute of food and beer from all villages in his area, but this was used to entertain visitors who came to the court-village.

643 782 The chief's religious duties lay mainly in propitiating the spirits of his ancestors on occasions when the community at large, in contrast to the chief's own private affairs, was either threatened or directly affected. The most obvious occasion was immediately before the rains came when flour was poured on the tree shrine and the spirits of the ancestors asked for good rains. Later when the rains were over a similar sacrifice was made asking for a good harvest. Sacrifices to the ancestors were also made on two other public occasions. They were made when some calamity had occurred or was believed to be impending. A run of unsuccessful campaigns induced Cingwalugwalu, a son of the Yao chief Mponda near Fort Johnston, to ask his father's father's brother to make sacri-